



The 1st meeting of the Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability Programme Board was held on Wednesday 29 July at 9.30am, by videoconference.

Present: Karen Watt (Chair)
Dr Richard Armour
Scott McLarty
Grant Ritchie
Professor Petra Wend

Officers: Martin Boyle
Martin Fairbairn
Dr Stuart Fancey
Lorna MacDonald
Dr Donna MacKinnon
Carina MacRitchie (Review Secretariat)
Jane McAteer (Review Programme Manager)
Lynne Raeside

**Scottish
Government:** Linda Pooley

Apologies: Sarah Davidson
Lorna Gibbs

1/1 Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all members to the first meeting of the Programme Board, introduced the SFC senior team and review team and invited introductions from external members. The Chair welcomed Linda Pooley, attending on behalf of Lorna Gibbs. The Chair advised that there may be contact with members for advice outwith the Programme Board meetings. The Secretariat will contact external members to seek approval for short biographies which will be published on the review pages of the SFC website. Minutes of Programme Board meetings will also be published on the review web pages.

1/2 Background and remit of the Programme Board

The Chair set out the background and context of the Review, indicating the review was formally triggered by the 3 June 2020 [letter](#) to Mike Cantlay, SFC Chair from Richard Lochhead, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, which outlines the objectives of the review and which are referenced within the published [review briefing paper](#). The review is also set in the context of the fluidity of the ongoing emergency pandemic situation. The Chair also outlined to members some background to the role, function and size of SFC as an organisation. SFC has an extensive remit but small staff resource, but has pivoted well in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and is energised by the opportunity to lead this review. As an organisation it should also change to respond to this emergency year and beyond.

The Chair invited comments on the draft Terms of Reference for the Board. In discussion the members noted:

- The meeting papers were detailed and welcome.
- Policy lead areas are interesting.
- The role of the Programme Board in terms of advising on SFC Structure.

1/3 Review briefing and Project Implementation Document (PID)

The Programme Board received the review briefing and the PID. The review is informed by the letter from the Minister and is used as the basis to inform the PID which is an evolving document. It sets out the governance arrangements, context and common understanding, scope and aim, is guided by a set of principles for the programme and Scottish Government policy assumptions.

The planned approach to the review is an inclusive, systemic programme with learners at the centre, reflected in the planned engagement with stakeholders. Findings and assumptions will be developed in consultation with the sectors, with the intention of sustaining existing parts of the system that are held in high esteem while responding effectively to the new challenges faced by the economy and further and higher education. Phasing of the review will help respond to what happens in September/October in terms of student enrolments. The immediate aim remains the stabilisation of the sectors in the emergency AY2020-21.

The first call for evidence has been published and may help what propositions can be considered for the Phase 1 report. Desk-based reviews, call for evidence analysis and engagements with stakeholders will inform the propositions. Some work has been commissioned externally as part of the review and this will support objective analysis. Phase 1 will elevate the impact of the choices for future direction and include interpretation of recent sector reports.

Comments were invited from members on the PID:

- The inclusive approach is positive. Engagement will be welcomed by stakeholders, especially where there may be anxiety in the sector about the review. Any lack of trust is a risk to the review. Defining coherent provision is important and engagement with the sector is very important.
- This is a good document. Welcome the approach and the need for clear deliverables and delivery mechanisms. Question on clarity of scope of the review for post-16 sector and connections to schools and other bodies. The Chair outlined the remit is post-16 education bodies but it is important that we make the connection to the post-16 learner journey and senior phase.
- Re-prioritisation of activity and timescales are important, as is the urgency of 2020-21 decisions in phase 1. The review phases will need to operate in parallel.
- The Chair indicated that the review is proceeding in parallel – for the immediate year 2020-21 and for the longer term. The end of phase 1 will signal the important questions and choices for the future. There is a need to outline what the SFC can influence and achieve. SFC is a long term investor and that is the primary focus. What happens longer term may also be shaped by events in September/October and the preparations put in place and differing risk appetites of the individual institutions.

- Colleges and universities are also long term investors and plan long-term which requires the necessity of a parallel track. SFC need to engage with sectors as part of long term decisions, and in those relationships influence the sector in their responses to the Covid-19 emergency and Brexit.
- The Chair advised on sustainability and financial intelligence work on the sectors being led by the Finance directorate, which is to be completed by the end of August
- Welcome the structure of the review being set-up and done so clearly to set up this board and deliver a huge task: points to consider:
 - Understanding what Scotland's economy needs in its broadest sense, beyond private business.
 - The policy assumptions should bear in the mind some of the interdependencies of the UK and Scottish Government arrangements.
- There are positive developments around R&D, funding and policy directions and we should maximise that to pivot support to our institutions.
- The Board underlined the critical importance of high quality and granular regional intelligence of employer and industry needs, which is necessary for decision-makers.

1/4 Project plan and Policy Grid

The Board received the project plan and policy grid. The plan specifically identified progress and the policy grid defined strands of work in more detail to be undertaken by the end of August. It was outlined that the intention is to clearly define progress and that they would be morphed for phase 2 into one project plan as a tool. This needs to be a robust evidence-led review and these documents attempt to outline the interlinking between the phases of the review. Comments were invited from the Programme Board about the proposed objectives and if there were any issues that the project team had not considered. In discussion the Programme Board noted:

- Coherent and financial sustainability projections and scenarios were discussed. Work is on track and financial forecasts are being considered by the SFC finance team.
- The use of a scenario planning session to tease out general assumptions and set of conversations about direction of travel had been discussed at the SFC Council Board. And that using scenario planning as a tool more generally in other engagements would be helpful.

- Members agreed on the critical need to scenario plan and involve new people to set-out provocative ideas – and the importance of making clear 3 or 4 statements and a series of ideas or propositions – is central to achieve a new vision. The Board was updated that as part of the Communications and Engagement strategy plans for sessions with Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE).
- Phase 1 outputs may inform and trigger further calls for evidence and the Chair invited members to consider how we may reach out to their contacts and networks to get that wider contribution.

1/5 Review Risk Register

The Programme Board received a paper providing SFC's Risk Register for the Review. It was outlined that:

- the risk analysis approach taken with the register had been to structure and ensure that both impacts and controls and mitigation are in place
- some of the identified 'red' risks are outwith the control of SFC and in some cases control and mitigation is limited; and heightened by the fact that SFC is a small organisation and who we deal with are independent and autonomous organisations
- Where there are broader societal changes like the economy, which may impact on the review and routine SFC business.

In discussion the Programme Board noted:

- The very comprehensive risks listed and that the risk register does capture the main risks.
- The risk itself of undertaking a review on long term vision and strategic change whilst managing the extreme emergency covid-19 situation.
- The depth of thinking already undertaken on the above point and the identified reputational risk of failure to deliver; and the ability of stakeholders to engage is an identified risk; but the risk also of lost opportunities and the need to manage the extensive range of priorities placed on SFC to deliver.
- Recognition of the challenge; SFC executive cannot prioritise every issue and that the review should rely on the existing governance structures already in place within the sectors and the potential to rely on a use of a delegated approach for alerts which could be appropriately utilised for risk reporting from the sectors.
- The real opportunity for change, the enhanced cooperation in relations with employees in some industry sectors and the potential to harness

existing commitment and engagement. A risk may be that if there are delays it will not have same impetus at a later point.

- The policy grid is good and detailed but could it be clearer about expected outcomes for the review.
- Propositions and questions can be identified through different engagements – some of these questions may be for Government policy.
- There is need for the review to ask the ‘big questions’ so that the sectors can consider future options for operating in this financial context and in a sustainable way.
- The Chair indicated that these ‘big questions’ are being framed through engagement with stakeholders and confirmed that future Programme Boards will consider them.

1/6 SFC Call for Evidence

The Programme Board received a copy of the recently published SFC Call for Evidence which invited all interested individuals and organisations to submit evidence to help inform and shape the first phase of the review.

The Programme Board noted the Call for Evidence.

1/7 Communications and Engagement strategy

The Programme Board received a paper on the communication and engagement strategy for the review.

In discussion the Programme Board noted that:

- The engagements are underway to help frame the questions for the next phase of the review, including utilising the expertise of RSE.
- The live and ongoing nature of the engagement strategy.
- The plan to seek assistance from established sector communications teams and broader professional communications experts.
- Importance of internal communications within SFC.
- SFC is utilising expertise from members on the SFC Board.
- The nature and scale of the review requires constant iteration and playback; and the importance of going back to stakeholders on a continual basis is very important.

1/7 Any other business

The Chair thanked members for attending and for their feedback.

1/8 Date of next meeting

The Chair indicated that the next meeting date is to be confirmed, potentially towards the end of phase 1, and that the secretariat would be in contact with members to confirm the date.